



# IMPACT REPORT

Fiscal Year  
**2024-2025**



# FROM OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

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At Indy Reads, we know literacy is relational.

Friendships, communities, nations, and norms are built through the sharing and debating of ideas using a common language. And so, we advance our vision of literacy for all every day through our commitment to learning and growing together. Everyone has something to share, and everyone has something to learn. Our work to design and deliver impactful programming for our dynamic community requires constant evolution—a commitment to reflection, curiosity, and imagination.

This program year was marked by notable strides in exercising our promise to being a **collaborative learning organization** that is innovative, inclusive, and student-centered. Our collaborative culture informs program improvements and inspires our innovation. As a learning organization that invites everyone to learn with us, we strive to continue becoming a leader in advancing equity through education.

In addition to our regular reflective learning practices with all staff, we launched Teacher Tea Times—monthly meetings for our instructional teams to exchange challenges and ideas—deepening our impact inside our Community Classrooms. With a generous grant from **Lilly Endowment**, we enlisted **Indiana University Indianapolis** to conduct a program evaluation, inviting fresh perspective on our student experience and pedagogical methodology in our adult education classrooms. We also spent time with other organizations and agencies to better understand the vital role that English literacy instruction plays in their efforts to support public health and safety, workforce development, children's literacy, and post-secondary education.

In light of increasing demand and the importance we place on meeting our students where they are, Indy Reads expanded and enhanced our course offerings. We now offer an in-person **ELL class at Southeast Community Center** and a refined hybrid instructional **Paraprofessional course** that maintained its accessibility for working participants by remaining virtual, while increasing belonging, shared accountability, and motivation with a more synchronous cohort experience.



We are pleased to have become **Flanner House's adult education provider** this year, collaborating closely with their Center for Working Families initiatives to support their community with literacy development and High School Equivalency preparation. Participants can now earn their diplomas and access the other career coaching and advancement opportunities Flanner House provides. By working together and leveraging each agency's strengths, we provide wraparound support and literacy education to our shared community and deepen our collective impact. This partnership proves our scalable model and informs our strategy as we look towards meeting the critical literacy needs across central Indiana.

We learned that our students are hungry for opportunities to express their creative energy and practice their speaking, listening, and leadership skills. Fourteen of our **242 community events that welcomed a record 8,357 participants** in our community bookstore, were led by Indy Reads' students. These students included Victor Granados, a former Spanish Literature professor, who leads our monthly Spanish Conversation Circles, and Yukiko Suzuki, who led a Beginner Origami Workshop.

Many of our adult learners are underemployed or jobseekers. We learned from local employers and workforce training providers of gaps in the education and training continuum that make their programs and opportunities inaccessible to adult English literacy learners. To bridge this gap, and with our partners LISC Indianapolis and Electric Plus, Indy Reads launched our new **Workforce Literacy Pillar**, serving 28 employees over 50 hours of instruction, 68% of whom demonstrated measurable skills gains and 86% of those who attempted their journeyman's



“ Our partnership with Indy Reads has proven that true collaboration leads to great accomplishments for those we serve together.”

*Debra A. White* | Deputy Director, Flanner House

exam earned their license. Through this new pillar, we streamline education and workforce training, **revealing, engaging, and uplifting currently untapped talent** in well-paying jobs within growing industries across the region.

Nationally, it has been a precarious year of funding for human services work. Humans and human connection are at the very heart of Indy Reads. We are grateful that in a year fraught with uncertain financial grounding for so many vital organizations, Indy Reads' community has banded together to ensure continued sustainable growth. We are honored that the support of community members like you has allowed us to lean further into what Indy Reads is here to do: welcome, innovate, and educate, together.

Thank you for reading with us, for learning with us, and for growing with us. With a **233% increase in demand for our services** over the last two years alone, there is much more to do. We look forward to working with you to further advance our vision of *100% literacy for all!*

With gratitude,

  
**Ruba Marshood**  
Chief Executive Officer





## OUR MISSION

Our mission is to build the literacy, English language, and job readiness skills to empower adults and their families to reach their full potential.

## OUR VISION

100% literacy  
for all.

## OUR CORE VALUES

### Student-Centered

We adapt our curriculum to meet the needs of individual students to ensure they can envision their own paths forward.

### Innovative

Both forward-thinking and flexible, we model best practices in adult education and nonprofit management, aspiring to excellence in everything we do.

### Inclusive

We create welcoming environments where students, volunteers, and supporters from diverse backgrounds gather.

### Literacy

Our programs help people develop basic literacy skills (reading, writing, speaking, and comprehending) and apply them in all aspects of their lives.



# OUR IMPACT

**25,532**

cumulative hours students dedicated to their Indy Reads' education this year.

**92%**

of students who completed their HSE earned their diploma.

**86%**

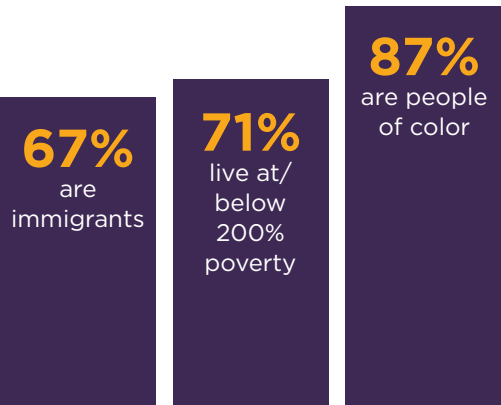
of eligible students in our pilot Workforce Literacy Program earned their professional license.

**80%**

of students who were post-tested made at least one Educational Functioning Level gain.

# OUR COMMUNITY

**98%** of our students are one or more of the following:



**479**

students served across 18 course offerings. This is an increase of 16% from PY2023-2024.



**44%**

of students have children under the age of 18.

**25,000+**

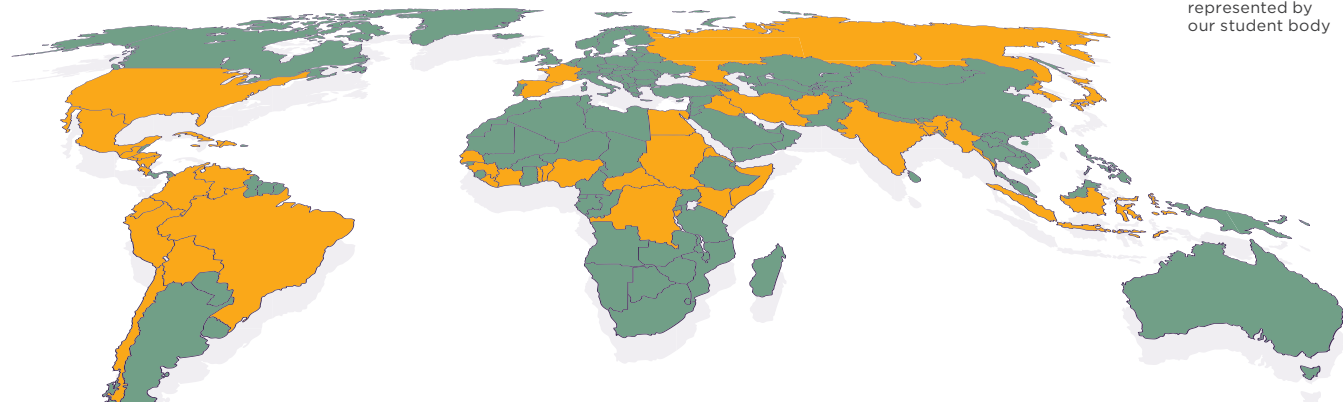
visitors to Indy Reads.



**8,357**

participants in 242 community events.

**47** countries of origin are represented by our student body, the top five of which are: United States, Venezuela, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Colombia.



**41**

**different primary languages** are represented in our student body, the top five of which are Spanish, English, Haitian Creole, French, and Arabic.

# COMMUNITY CLASSROOMS



## Literacy Foundations

These classes support the 1 in 6 native English-speaking adults in central Indiana who read below a 5th grade level. Indy Reads is the only adult education organization in the region that formally serves these students.



## Pathway to Literacy (ELL Foundations)

In partnership with Immigrant Welcome Center, these classes serve adult English language learners with 6 years or fewer of formal schooling in any language. Students in these classes are learning to read and write for the first time while learning English as a new language.



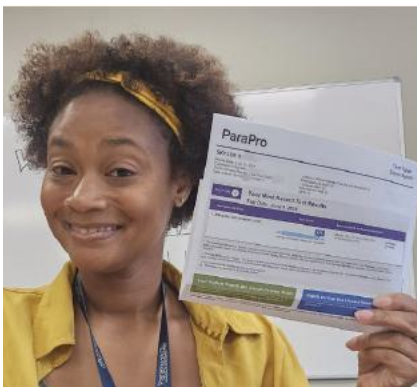
## English Language Learning (ELL)

These classes support adult learners at all levels of the English literacy spectrum. In our formal classrooms, ELL students develop their speaking, listening, reading, writing, and comprehension skills. Our weekly ELL Conversation Circles provide speaking and listening practice and are open to the public.



## High School Equivalency (HSE)

These classes cover all 5 subjects of the HiSET exam (reading, writing, math, social studies, and science), preparing students to earn their HSE diploma. This year, we were pleased to launch a new HSE course in partnership with Flanner House (above), serving young adults in their community.



## Customer Service and Paraprofessional Certifications

Our industry-recognized certifications help adults in Indiana to stand out in today's competitive job market. Our revamped Paraprofessional program saw 5 students like Sklyer S. earn their credential (left) this year. Sarah H., a Customer Service graduate, co-hosted our 2025 Fundraising Breakfast (center right, Class of 2024). Customer Service trainees like Lay C. can complete a paid internship in our community bookstore as an additional component of the course (right, Class of 2023).

## NEW: WORKFORCE LITERACY PROGRAM (WLP)



Our newly launched Workforce Literacy Program offers a customized curriculum for contextualized literacy education for employers and workforce training providers. This year, our pilot program in partnership with Electric Plus provided 28 employees with a customized ELL curriculum and instruction tailored to the electrical industry. Twelve have since passed their journeyman's exams and earned their licenses!

In addition, with support from LISC Indianapolis, we are researching and developing an ELL course for the construction, manufacturing, and public utility sectors. To inform this work, Indy Reads formed our new WLP Advisory Board, with facilitated support by Regionerate. Board members span industry sector employers and training and education providers, and include: Lesley Crane, *Inclusive Strategies*; Peggy Frame, *Southeast Community Services*; JP Ghio, *Citizens Energy*; Matt Hamilton, *Electric Plus*; Connie Harris, *EmployIndy*; Ana Sanchez, *F.A. Wilhelm Construction*; Cherylynn Schilling, *Powers Engineering*; Elias Serrano, *MS-IL Staffing & Packaging*; Mike Smith, *Robert Dietrick Company*; Ranae Stewart, *Purdue TAP*; Jeermal Sylvester, *St. Joseph's College*; William Turner, Jr., *Education/Workforce Professional*; and Maria Vilchez, *LISC Indianapolis*. Special thanks to this board for giving their expertise and time to support the design of our new initiative!

## COMMUNITY BOOKSTORE

Our independent bookstore in Fountain Square advances literacy for all with nearly 250 free and pay-what-you-can community events annually and our wide selection of new and used books.

We were thrilled to host **14 student-led events**, in which our adult learners shared their talents and expertise with attendees. Our monthly Spanish Conversation Circles, hosted by Indy Reads student and former Spanish literature professor from Mexico, Victor G. is the last Sunday of every month!

### Some of Our Events this Year

- ★ Lit Stage Open Mic Nights
- ★ English Conversation Circles
- ★ Spanish Conversation Circles
- ★ The Indy Reads Book Club

We make literature and community accessible to all with free and low-cost books to choose from, including our Banned Bookshelf where new donated books that have been challenged in the last two years are free for community members who need them.

This year, we gratefully **accepted nearly 20,000 gently used books** from the central Indiana community! We placed nearly **3,000 of those donated books with 9 organizations** that needed them, including stocking Little Free Courthouse Libraries and Little Free Libraries throughout the region.

- ★ Community Conversations
  - ★ Winter Party with Kwanzaa Claus
  - ★ Learn Origami with Yukiko
- and more!*



# THIS YEAR AT INDY READS



## English Conversation Circles

English Conversation Circles are held every Sunday in our community bookstore. This weekly event is open to the public and facilitated by an Indy Reads staff member. Everyone is welcome to practice their English-speaking skills while making new friends!



## All Staff Learning Sessions

Indy Reads staff meets monthly to continue our commitment as a learning organization. Learning sessions focused on close readings and discussions of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Paulo Freire, practical applications of a student-led approach, anti-racism, and trauma-informed care.



## The Love Thy Neighborhood Awards by LISC Indianapolis

Indy Reads was honored to receive LISC Indianapolis' 2024 Love Thy Neighborhood Award in the Education category! Our video submission included moving testimonials from students like Rashidah (pictured above with her children), a High School Equivalency graduate who is now enrolled at Ivy Tech Community College.



## Trick-or-Treat at Indy Reads

Our annual Halloween event during Fountain Fletcher District Associate's Scare in the Square welcomed ~500 attendees, more than half of whom were children. This year, we gave trick-or-treaters free books and facilitated family-friendly "spooky" craft and story stations with the help of a few of our volunteers!



## Celebrating Student Achievement

Indy Reads conducts student-centered informal assessment all year long to ensure students are receiving support that aligns with their own goals. Quarterly, we implement formal pre- and post-tests in all Community Classrooms and celebrate with certificates of achievement!



## Winter Party with Kwanzaa Claus

During our annual winter holiday celebration, we welcomed more than 60 adults and their children to take pictures with Kwanzaa Claus and receive free wrapped gifts. We are grateful to Flanner House CEO Brandon D. Cosby for helping us distribute our presents this year. Our enrolled students and their families also enjoyed a potluck dinner with staff during this public event!





## Indy Reads Partners with Electric Plus for Pilot Workforce Literacy Program (WLP)

In partnership with Electric Plus, Indy Reads launched its first Workforce Literacy Program with a 12-week pilot course for 28 Electric Plus employees! The class offered more than 50 hours of instruction through a customized English literacy curriculum designed to build electricians' confidence and industry skills.



## Community Beyond the Classroom

Over the course of the year, online and in-person classes gathered all over Indianapolis to connect, celebrate, and extend their learning beyond the classroom. Students, their families, volunteers, teachers, and staff gathered for trips to Eagle Creek Park, the Indianapolis Zoo, Flanner House, Indy Reads' community bookstore, and more!



## Indie Indy Book Crawl

Indy Reads joined 22 other independent bookstores in Indiana for the second annual Indie Indy Book Crawl March 19-March 23, 2025! We welcomed more than 4,500 visitors across the 4-day event celebrating the literary and literacy scene throughout the state.



## Indy Reads in the Community

Indy Reads visited 20 organizations, fairs, panels, and more this program year including Indy Pride (above). We enjoy connecting and sharing resources with so many different groups and communities!



## Home Libraries for Student Families

Indy Reads prepared 84 new book bundles for 220 adults and 82 children through our Home Library program this year! We know that the greatest indicator of a child's literacy level is the literacy level of their grownups.



## 2025 Fundraising Breakfast: Unlocking Our Potential

Our 2025 Breakfast, presented by Electric Plus, welcomed more than 400 attendees from across our community to Ivy Tech Community College Conference Center for an inspiring morning that met our on-the-day \$25,000 match and raised critical funds to support all of our programming! We are grateful to our students, alumna, and partners who made the inspiring morning extra special, notably our hosts Lacha Bonet, ELL student, and Sarah Hoveyze, Customer Service graduate, and guest speakers KaSarah Fitzpatrick, HSE graduate; Tim Whicker, Electric Plus CEO; Dana Huerta, Literacy Foundations student; and André Carson, United States Congressman.

# STORIES FROM OUR STUDENTS



“Let me tell you, Mary (Indy Reads Instructor) is just amazing. She’s so eager to teach. She simplifies everything and breaks it down so that we can all understand. We do different things every day. It’s always a little bit of math and a little bit of reading. I want you to know that with Indy Reads **you’re in the right place to get the help you need.**”

**Dana H.** | Literacy Foundations student

“Indy Reads is a place where people are connecting with each other. Some people in my class really struggled with reading out loud and were putting forth a lot of effort. **It helped me to realize that I wasn’t in this by myself.**”

**KaSarah F.** | High School Equivalency (HSE) graduate

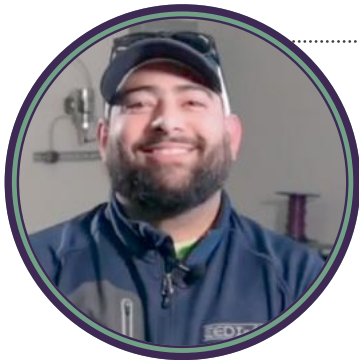


“I need to help my daughter with school, and when I go to places, when I go to the doctor, I need English, too. I want to know everything in English! **My dream is that I will help my daughter go to university.**”

**Vivian G.** | English Language Learning (ELL) student

“You are valid before and after the decision to earn your high school diploma. I think people struggle with that. **What you were doing before you tried to earn your high school diploma allowed you to get here.** That attitude will allow you to learn. I appreciate the support Indy Reads gives to the community and gave to me.”

**Kuirsell K.** | High School Equivalency (HSE) graduate



“I take this program, because **I want to speak better with my supervisor, my journeymen, my foremans, and my friends.** This program helped me a lot with my family when we go to the market, when we go to the hospital. I like it a lot. I learned a lot, too.”

**Estiward W.** | Workforce Literacy Program (WLP) student, Electric Plus employee

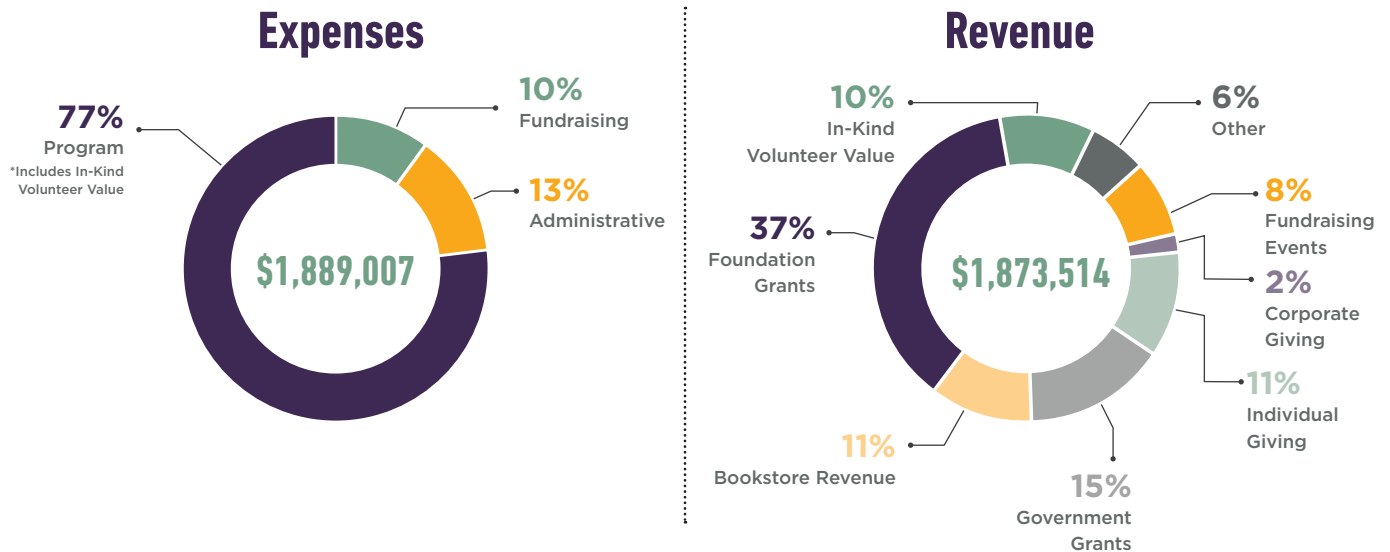




Central Indiana needs Indy Reads and, increasingly, central Indiana is turning to Indy Reads.”

Adarsh Mantravadi | Board Chair, Indy Reads

## ORGANIZATION FINANCIALS



## INDY READS BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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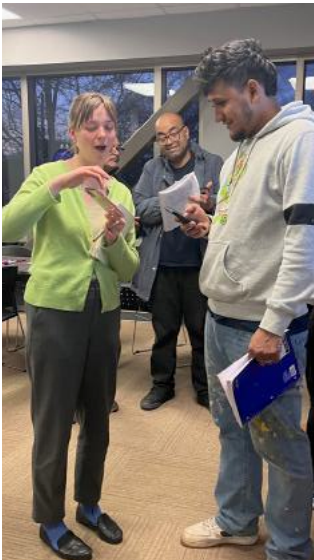
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# OUR VOLUNTEERS



**473**  
 volunteers  
 donated  
**6,003**  
 hours of service





# PARTNERS AND SPONSORS



“Indy Reads has been an incredible partner, not just in delivering English literacy training, but also in tailoring the class to the electrical industry and our employees’ needs.”

**Matt Hamilton** | Superintendent, Electric Plus

## DONORS

### Literacy League

Our Literacy League members are donors who have pledged a monthly gift of \$5 or more to support Indy Reads. Their steady support is recognized with a decorative bookmark displayed in our community bookstore, as well as a free used book each month. To become a Literacy League member, visit [www.indyreads.org/league](http://www.indyreads.org/league).



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## 2025 Fundraising Breakfast: Unlocking Our Potential

Our 2025 Fundraising Breakfast: Unlocking Our Potential, presented by Electric Plus, was held on April 24, 2025. With a 233% increase in demand for our services, we welcomed more than 400 attendees who were inspired to advance Indy Reads' mission and vision for growth. The powerful event highlighting our students and graduates was possible with the generosity of our sponsors.

### TITLE SPONSOR



### NOBEL LAUREATE



### PULITZER PRIZE



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